

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE 1

THE BALTIMORE SUN  
11 November 1982

# Briton who fed Soviets secrets given 38-year prison sentence

By Joan Graham  
London Bureau of The Sun

London—Geoffrey Prime, branded a "ruthless spy" by the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Lane, at London's Old Bailey yesterday, was sentenced to 38 years in prison after pleading guilty to feeding secrets to the Soviets for 14 years.

Hushed spectators gathered in Court No. 1 heard how the slight and emotionless Russian linguist, engaged in highly classified work at Government Communications Headquarters at Cheltenham, had passed vital secrets to Soviet contacts in Berlin, Vienna, Potsdam and London.

When arrested and charged with sexually assaulting three young girls, he told his distraught wife for the first time that he was also a Russian agent. She agonized for three weeks, seeking advice from her lawyer, doctor and parents before reporting him to the police.

Yesterday Prime, 44, quietly pleaded guilty to all charges and was sentenced to 35 years for espionage and 3 years for assaulting the girls. He started his sentence immediately at an unnamed prison.

Prime, who had been cleared for top secret work at least twice, including checks on his sex life, had been told by his Russian spymasters that if he wished to defect he would be given the rank of colonel and a pension.

Prime revealed how he started spying while serving with the Royal Air Force in Germany in the early 1960s. By 1977 he found the pressure of living a double life had grown too much. Twice he booked flights to Helsinki, Finland, but turned back because he could not leave his second wife, whom he married five years

ago, and his three stepchildren.

Part of yesterday's court hearing was held in secret because of the highly sensitive nature of the secrets Prime betrayed.

But in open session, Attorney General Sir Michael Havers said his activities had caused "exceptionally grave damage" to the interest of Britain and its allies.

In passing sentence, Lord Lane said a huge proportion of the damage done was "quite irrevocable." Prime, he said, was "a ruthless and rationally motivated spy," and the sentence was "designed to punish you, to mark the public's abhorrence of the crimes you have committed and finally to deter others who might toy with the ideas of treachery in the future."

Prime looked on as his spy kit, described as "the indispensable tools of the modern spy," was put on view. Among the items was a briefcase with a secret compartment, a code pad and a miniature camera.

His statement revealed how he was trained in handling microdots, the dead-letter-box procedure, his password, his code name of Rowlands and how he received money secreted in hiding places in southern England.

After being promoted to section head in the civil service at Cheltenham, Prime took 500 photographs of top secret documents, before resigning in 1977 from the service when the pressure became too much for him. He flew to Vienna after his resignation with the films of the documents and was questioned on a Russian cruise ship in the Danube.

The attorney general never spelled out precisely the position Prime held in the government's intelligence-gathering networks, but it is known that as an expert Russian speaker he lis-

tened in to Soviet-bloc communications and passed on information he thought would be of use.

According to British and U.S. intelligence chiefs, Geoffrey Prime was responsible for the longest and potentially most damaging Soviet penetration of Western intelligence since the Second World War.

He supplied the Russians with a stream of highly sensitive information, described by Sir Michael as "matters of utmost secrecy." Cheltenham is jointly operated by the U.S. National Security Agency and the British government.